

THE NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING AREA

The Common Sense Building Block of a More Livable, Less Traffic Congested City

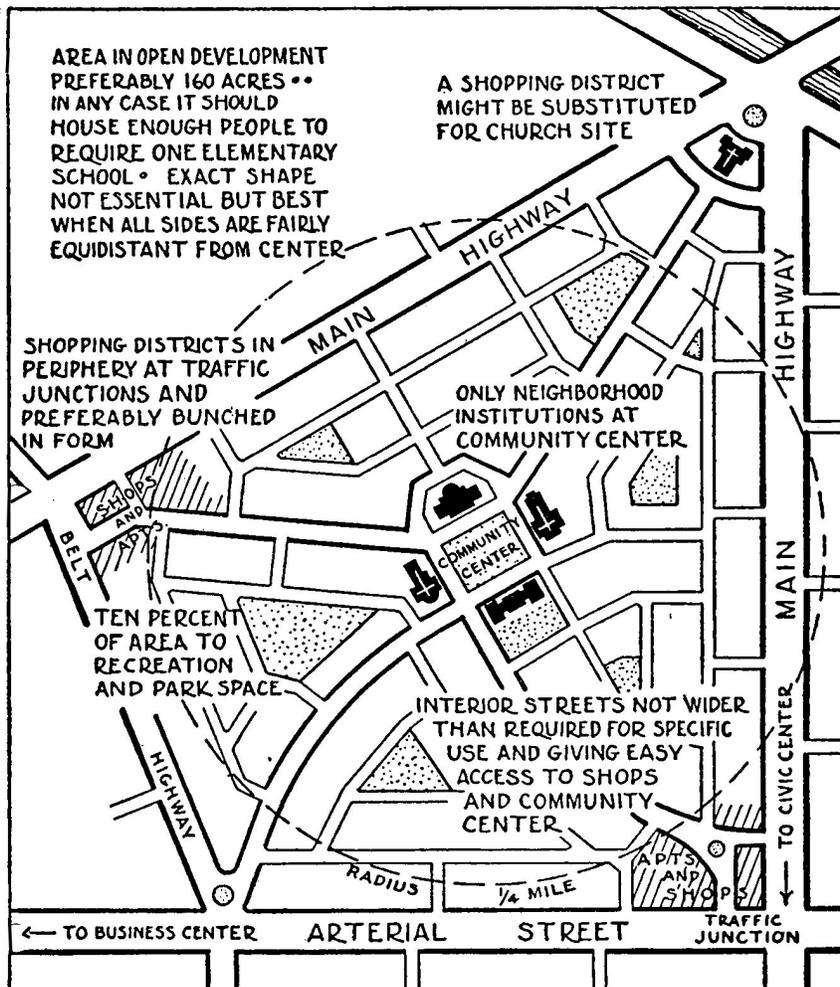
What Is A Neighborhood Planning Area?

As used in this plan, a neighborhood planning area means a section of the city of Salisbury, usually about one half to one mile on a side, that is formed by major physical boundaries or barriers. Most often, the planning area boundaries are major thoroughfares. However, planning area boundaries may also be formed by a creek or stream, railroad tracks, a large industrial area, or other significant physical barrier. In general, these are all boundaries or barriers which inhibit pedestrian movement. (See **Neighborhood Planning Area Map**, Back of Plan)

As a practical definition, a neighborhood planning area may also be viewed as an area of the city, normally bounded by major thoroughfares, across which you would not comfortably send a ten-year-old child. Such planning areas, due to their size, often contain more than one neighborhood (otherwise referred to today as a "subdivision").

Note specific features of a well-designed neighborhood planning area:

- The ¼ mile radius extending out from the community center encourages walking to neighborhood-oriented institutions.
- The street layout and pavement widths allow for ease of movement within the neighborhood but discourage cut through traffic. The approximate ½ mile spacing between thoroughfares makes these perimeter roads the more convenient option for through traffic.
- The internal network of interwoven streets provides many alternative walking routes, adding interest and options for the pedestrian. There are no cul de sacs to isolate and create dead end streets.
- Children can walk to school or ride bikes to the store without crossing a major thoroughfare. Families can walk to places of worship. Some employees can walk to work places within the neighborhood planning area
- Parks and open spaces are well located for convenient access and to encourage "eyes on the park" for security and safety. Parks are not simply leftover sites, nor are they "hidden away" in the woods.
- Commercial uses are located at the corners of the planning area, rather than the sides, which discourages cut through traffic.
- Apartments are located closest to the shopping areas or on upper floors, above the stores themselves.



A well-designed neighborhood planning area, as reproduced from the New York Regional Survey of 1929

Seven Principles For A More Livable, Less Traffic Congested Salisbury

This plan proposes seven common sense principles for the design, development, and redevelopment of neighborhood planning areas within the city of Salisbury. Most of these principles require much more explanation than can be provided in this brief section—the particular policies of the plan provide details on the reasoning and significance of each of these principals as applied to specific circumstances in Salisbury. The purpose of this section is simply to provide an overview of the seven concepts.

Each neighborhood planning area in the city will not lend itself equally well to the application of these principles. This is particularly true in the newer, existing suburban neighborhoods of the city where established development patterns and street layouts may differ considerably from those recommended in this plan. Therefore, these principles should be applied *to the extent practical* to each of Salisbury's developed and undeveloped planning areas* over the next twenty years— and beyond. The seven principles are:

Principle 1: Provide for evenly spaced thoroughfares about 1/2 mile apart but not more than 1 mile apart north to south and east to west.

This spacing of thoroughfares will create/reinforce neighborhood planning areas that are not so large as to be unwalkable. This frequency in spacing also helps minimize travel demand for cut through traffic on neighborhood streets by making thoroughfares the better alternative. While there are several exceptions, many of the city's existing and proposed thoroughfares come close to this standard.

Principle 2: Provide for each of the daily needs of living within each neighborhood planning area:

- **Places to live**
- **Places to work**
- **Places to shop**
- **Places to gather (schools, parks, churches, etc.)**

Adherence to this principle will provide residents with *at least the option* of staying inside the neighborhood planning area for some of their daily activities, provided the internal circulation pattern of the planning area allows it. In doing so, the total number of trips that the city's thoroughfares must handle can be reduced.#

Each area in which it is intended to develop a localized life must of course be provided with every facility for all the different branches of life that it is practicable to localize. There should be local work and occupation for as many as possible of the people living there; there should be local markets and shopping centers to provide for their daily needs; there should be educational and recreational facilities.

Lewis Mumford, January 1954

* For the purposes of this plan, it is estimated that the 2000 corporate limits of Salisbury contain about two dozen neighborhood planning areas. See map on the following page. (There are some areas of the city that do not lend themselves to convenient demarcation.)

The Growth Factors Analysis of this plan notes that traffic volumes on several of Salisbury's major thoroughfares have been increasing at more than ten times the rate of population growth. This extraordinary rate of increase in traffic may be attributed in large measure to increased concentration of traffic on major thoroughfares, total automobile dependence of some neighborhoods, and the lack of services within walking distance of many residential areas. It is estimated that a typical suburban home generates approximately 10-14 automobile trips per day. If only half of those trips could be contained within the neighborhood planning area, future increases in traffic volumes on the city's major thoroughfares could be reduced significantly.

Principle 3: Connect the streets, walkways, and bikeways of new neighborhoods within each neighborhood planning area. Employ careful design to discourage through traffic from outside the neighborhood planning area.

Too often, subdivision plats are drawn up to purposefully isolate a new neighborhood from adjoining areas. “Exclusive” has become a much overused marketing term intended to imply a neighborhood which is physically or economically superior and set apart from its surroundings. Unfortunately, the only way in or out of such exclusive neighborhoods is usually the closest major thoroughfare. This results in a situation where all traffic must get onto already congested major thoroughfares to go anywhere. It also prevents walking or biking to other neighborhoods or to other non-residential areas, such as places to work, shop, or play. In contrast, by connecting adjoining neighborhoods to one another, pedestrian movement within the neighborhood planning area is made possible, thereby avoiding the need to get out onto the major thoroughfare for every aspect of civic life.

In a well-designed neighborhood unit, [people] should be able to go to any part of it, including the shopping area, the library, the church, the community center, without crossing a traffic artery.

Lewis Mumford, May 1956

Principle 4: Design the streets (layout and width primarily) according to their intended use.

Neighborhood streets should be no wider than necessary to serve the specific type of development and traffic that will occur along each street segment in the neighborhood (i.e. large single family houses vs. small single family houses, townhouses vs. patio homes, garages or driveways vs. on-street parking, alley ways vs. side streets vs. avenues, etc—each type of development and street places different demands on the street). Thoughtful street design will encourage their full use by neighborhood planning area residents but will discourage cut-through traffic.

Principle 5: Do not allow large, homogeneous tracts of land to be developed in a single land use or class of housing.

This will encourage walking from residential places to places of work, shopping and gathering. It will also discourage the economic and social isolation that comes from creating large developments, which cater to a single age or income group.

The other force that has attenuated the social functions of the city, . . . is the tendency toward segregation: a tendency accentuated by the seemingly progressive function of zoning, which, in the United States, often segregates classes and income groups as well as races, into identifiable quarters, whose members have relatively little to do with those of higher or lower status. As a result, each group, each class, each social caste lives in a world which, in both its architectural and its social arrangements, denies the manifold cooperations of all human communities.

**Lewis Mumford,
January 12, 1962**

Principle 6: Locate major traffic generators* only on the corners of the neighborhood planning area.

This discourages cross-town traffic from being tempted to cut through a neighborhood planning area to get to one of these major attractors. It also ensures that major traffic generators are located where traffic can be adequately *dispersed*—on to the two or more major thoroughfares forming the corner of the neighborhood planning area.

* Major traffic generators are normally large scale or high volume shopping and work places. Two examples of uses that you would not want to see placed on the “side” of a neighborhood planning area would be a hospital or a shopping center.

Principle 7: Locate pedestrian-oriented neighborhood services* at one or more carefully selected and designed focal points central to the neighborhood.

Obviously, this principle is most easily applied to *new* developments where careful site selection and design can integrate these services into the fabric of the neighborhood from the outset. This encourages walking and biking to these services by neighborhood planning area residents, but makes access by cross-town traffic inconvenient. It can also be a convenient location for a central neighborhood planning area transit stop.

Important note:

These principles are not intended to suggest that all the needs of a person or family are going to be met within a single neighborhood planning area. However, a primary objective and benefit of this concept is to provide at least the option for some portion of each household's needs to be met within the boundaries of the neighborhood planning area, thereby reducing congestion on the city's thoroughfares, and providing for a better neighborhood environment and quality of life.

* Pedestrian oriented neighborhood services might include uses such as an elementary school, one or more places of worship, a community center, park and recreational uses, and perhaps a small general store and post office.